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The Patronage of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham,
and the Triumph of Painting at the Stuart Court

Akademie Verlag

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for Armin
and my parents

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## Chapter Three

# Acknowledgements

# 'No Painting ever bore Greater':[1]
## Hans Holbein's Whitehall Mural and the Tradition of the English Icon

In 1604, a year after James VI, King of Scotland, had succeeded to the throne of Elizabeth I and, as King James I, had united the crowns of England and Scotland, Karel van Mander, the Flemish painter, poet and first biographer of Hans Holbein the Younger, was received at the king's Privy Chamber at Whitehall Palace. Mander describes seeing the king, who 'stood there, majestic in his splendour, (…) so lifelike that the spectator felt abashed, annihilated in his presence'.[2] The king whose presence so impressed Mander, was, however, not James but Henry VIII, whose full-length portrait had been painted, as a fresco, by Hans Holbein several decades earlier, in 1537. (Fig. 1)

Situated comparatively low down on the wall, Holbein's life-size portrait confronts its beholder at eye level.[3] The Tudor king stands imposingly, legs astride, arms akimbo, against an elaborate background. His legs thrust into the ground, Henry carries the massive bulk of an enormous torso, which Holbein has made to

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1  Quoted from the inscription on the altar depicted in Hans Holbein's *Whitehall Mural* of 1537. See note 5.

2  Quoted from: Henri Hymans [1584–1606]: *Le Livre des Peintres de Carel van Mander*, ND: Hissink, Amsterdam, 1979, p. 218.

3  The mural's position has long been debated. In 1967 Roy Strong suggested that it was set far above the ground on a gable either side of a window. Strong revised this idea in 1995, after Oliver Millar had convincingly argued that the mural was positioned only slightly above floor level, a hypothesis now generally agreed upon. See: Strong, Roy (1969): *Holbein and Henry VIII*, London: Routledge; Millar, Oliver (1978): *Holbein and the Court of Henry VIII*, Exh. Cat., London: The Queen's Gallery; Strong, Roy (1995): *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting and Iconography*, 3 vols., Woodbridge: Boydell Press; and, Brooke, Xanthe and David Crombie (2003): *Henry VIII Revealed. Holbein's Portrait and its Legacy*, London: Holberton.

Fig. 1: Remigius van Leemput, after Hans Holbein, *Whitehall Mural*, 1667

look even heavier by extending it over the width of the great niche that frames the composition from behind. Henry's eyes meet the spectator's gaze, while his face and body are set at a very slight diagonal, leaving the beholder with a distinct sense of power ready to break free. The tension is reinforced by Henry's astute, square chin and his small, tight lips, implying a determination to rule. His sovereign power resides in his exaggerated figure and muscularity, which resonates in the ostentatious display of jewels, rings, richly set gemstones and weighty gold chains, for which Holbein probably used real gold leaf.[4] As the first life-size portrait of an English monarch, Holbein's *Whitehall Mural* marks a moment of dramatic change within the

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4    For a detailed account of the techniques Holbein employed for the *Whitehall Mural*, see: Brooke (2003): op. cit., (above).

tradition of dynastic portraiture. Having turned from Rome in 1534, when the Act of Supremacy established in law his new title of Supreme Head of the Church of England and abolished papal power in the kingdom, Henry was the first English monarch deliberately to fashion the image of his political body in painting.

Holbein had been commissioned to provide a portrait of Henry VIII together with his third wife, Jane Seymour, that displayed the couple together with the king's parents, Henry VII and his queen, Elizabeth of York, for the king's principal residence and seat of government, and in so doing the artist designed the definitive icon of English monarchy. In 1698 the fresco was lost in a fire that destroyed almost the entire palace, and it now survives only in its firmly modelled cartoon and in a much smaller copy on canvas by the Flemish artist Remigius van Leemput. Painted in 1667, the copy shows the two kings and queens before a classical, Italianate loggia-style structure, flanking a great altar in the middle ground that bears a Latin inscription:

> If you enjoy seeing the illustrious figures of heroes,
> Look on these; no painting ever bore greater.
> The great debate, the competition, the great question is whether the Father
> Or the son is the victor. For both indeed are supreme.
> The former often overcame his enemies, and the fires of his country,
> And finally gave peace to its citizens.
>
> The son, born indeed for greater tasks, from the altar
> Removed the unworthy, and put worthy men in their place.
> To unerring virtue, the presumption of popes has yielded,
> And so long as Henry the Eighth carries the sceptre in his hand
> Religion is renewed, and during his reign
> The doctrines of God have begun to be held in his honour.[5]

As historians concerned with the Tudor monarchy have frequently pointed out, this inscription connected Henry's image with a violently anti-papal reign. Situated in Henry's Privy Chamber, the principal ceremonial room in Whitehall Palace where

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5    Holbein's mural carries the inscription in Latin: SI IVVAT HEROVM CLARAS VIDISSE FIGURAS, / SPECTA HAS, MAIORES NVLLA TABELLA TVLIT. / CERTAMEN MAGNUM LIS, QVAESTIO MAGNA PATERNE, / FILIVS AN VINCAT VICIT – VTERQVE QVIDEM. / ISTE SVOS HOSTES PATRIAEQVE INCENDIA SAEPE / SVSTVLIT ET PACEM CIVIBVS VSQVE DEDIT. / FILIVS AD MAIORA QVIQEM PROCNATVS AB ARIS / SVBMOVET INDIGNOST SVBSTITVTIQVE PROBOS. / CERTAE VIRTVTI, PAPARUM AVDACIA CESSIT. / HENRICO OCTAVO SCEP-TRA GERENTE MANV. / REDDITA RELIGIO EST, ISTO REGNANTE DEIQVE / DOGMATA CEPERVNT ESSE IN HONORE SUO.

he received ambassadors and held court functions, Holbein's fresco provided an impressive image of the Tudor King.[6] Showing Henry as a commanding and confident ruler, Holbein had created a new image of the English monarch that enhanced his bodily authority and bolstered his claim to the notion that sovereignty was God's earthly representative. Having already disposed of two wives, Henry's claim to sovereign rule was based on his assertion of a fecund Tudor monarchy, which Holbein's picture amply emphasises in the display of a fertile union, both past and future. Through his marriage to Elizabeth of York, Henry VII had reconciled with his enemy after the War of the Roses and had laid the foundation for a fruitful and successful dynasty. With his son, Henry VIII, the situation was different. Still lacking a male heir after two marriages, and with Princess Mary, his daughter with Katherine of Aragon, gaining support from the east Midlands and northern England, Henry was increasingly prone to open attacks, and he therefore needed to demonstrate his own sexual potency in order to maintain the authority of his rule.

Creating an image of dynastic fecundity, Holbein's picture confirms Henry's right to sovereign rule by emphasising the king's sexual power. His legs set apart, Henry stands upright with his codpiece prominently displayed in three-quarter profile. Deliberately lengthened in proportion to his torso, Holbein emphasises Henry's muscular thighs and calves by contrasting them with the long skirts of the two women and the covered legs of Henry VII. The presence of the two women testifies to the legitimacy and permanence of the dynasty and also subtly underlines Henry's dominant position. Neither woman engages the eye of the spectator. Their subservient position is reinforced by their inward-facing hand gestures. Within this exclusive view, Henry's legs are rendered iconic, representing his ability to stay erect.[7] Exposing the king's legs as a symbol of his virility, Holbein's picture provides a vision of absolute masculinity whose phallic dimension is further emphasised by Henry's wide shoulder pads. Through the visual affirmation of the king's power to procreate, Holbein promotes the king's sexual body as constitutive of the power of the English monarchy.

It is in this iconic rendering of royal fecundity that Henry's portrait invites comparison with the famous images of Elizabeth I, which promoted her as the Vir-

6    For the structure of the English royal residence, see: Thurley, Simon (1999): *Whitehall Palace: An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments 1240–1698*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

7    The significance of the iconic leg in the visual construction of sovereign masculinity has been discussed in the context of the absolutist regime of Louis XIV. See: Zanger, Abby (1998): 'Lim(b)inal Images. Betwixt and Between Louis XIV's Martial and Marital Bodies', in: Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (eds.), *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 32–63.

Fig. 2: George Gower, *Elizabeth I*, *c.* 1588

gin Queen.[8] While Holbein's representation of Henry's monarchic role relied on the exaggeration of his masculine power, portraits of his daughter depended on the display of her sexually subdued self-containment. Louis Montrose, who was first to undertake a comparison of the images of the two rulers in English art, has pointed out that in the place corresponding to that of Henry's prominent codpiece in the *Whitehall Mural*, George Gower's famous *Armada-Portrait* from 1588 displays a

8    On the image of Elizabeth I, see: Strong, Roy (1987): *Gloriana. Portraits of Elizabeth I*, London: Pimlico; Belsey, Andrew and Catherine (1990): 'Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I', in: Lucy Gent (ed.), *Renaissance Bodies. The Human Figure in English Culture*, *c. 1540–1660*, London: Reaktion Books, pp. 11–35.

giant pearl as emblem of Elizabeth's chastity.[9] (Fig. 2) The pearl's emblematic significance has been re-emphasised by Andrew and Catherine Belsey, who point to its juxtaposition with the vast pearl of the queen's headdress, which, linked by the near-vertical line of pearls that fasten Elizabeth's bodice, connects her entitlement to sovereign rule to her chastity.[10] Recompense of Elizabeth's high-risk decision not to take a husband, and thereby to end Tudor succession, was the central concern of those portraits of the queen that at first maintained the possibility of marriage by depicting her as a fecund virgin, and later, when the laws of nature had made marriage futile, promoted Elizabeth's virginity as the selfless abstention of a queen only devoted to her people.

A decade earlier, Nicholas Hilliard, the queen's personal painter and goldsmith, had presented a design for the iconography of Elizabeth's selflessness and sacrifice in his *Pelican Portrait*, painted between 1572 and 1576. (Fig. 3) The canvas derives its name from the prominently displayed Pelican Badge on the front of the queen's dress – a jewelled *imprese* that was one of the most valuable pieces of the Royal Jewel House. The bird plucks his breast in order to feed his fledglings with his own blood, serving as an emblem of the body of Christ who was sacrificed to offer spiritual nourishment to mankind, and here portrays the queen as a mother to her people. This iconography relates to the matching composition of Hilliard's *Phoenix Portrait*, produced in the same period and showing the queen with the jewelled pendant of a phoenix in its burning nest. This unique and self-sufficient bird, embodying another trope of Elizabeth's rule, amplifies her motto: *semper eadem*. Through the carefully orchestrated display of a jewel, the *Pelican Portrait* is paradigmatic of the portraiture of Elizabeth's time, in which jewels, clothes, animals, furniture and other objects served as emblems of the sitter's biography.[11] The Elizabethan image promoted the art of the emblem over the art of illusion. Although illusionistic painting in the manner of Flemish realism was still practised at the late sixteenth-century English court, by the 1570s it had clearly fallen out of fashion and had given way to an emphasis on the depiction of dress and family coats of arms as an index of social identity.

Still very much influenced by the art of heraldry, Elizabethan painting frequently employed heraldic insignia as symbolic ornament. The queen's coat of arms replaced

9   See: Montrose, Louis Adrian (1986): 'The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text', in: Patricia Parker and David Quint (eds.), *Literary Theory / Renaissance Texts*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 303–40.

10  See: Belsey and Belsey (1990): op. cit., (note 8).

11  For a detailed reading of the emblematics of Elizabethan painting, see: Ziegler, Georgianna (2005): 'Devising a Queen: Elizabeth Stuart's Representation in the Emblematic Tradition', in: *Emblematica*, no. 14, pp. 155–79.

Fig. 3: Nicolas Hilliard, *Elizabeth I: The Pelican Portrait*, *c.* 1573

images of Christ, while her portraits aimed to present an icon rather than a human figure, a Virgin Queen who embodies the virtuous focus of her masculine court and inspires her subjects to acts of gallantry and heroism.[12] By suppressing her sexuality and rendering her likeness eternally youthful, these images repudiated the course of time. The Tudor queen was placed in a realm that was not bounded by the laws of

12  For the motive of Elizabeth as a warrior maiden, see: Warner, Marina (1987): *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Berry, Philippa (1989): *Of Chastity and Power. Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen*, London: Routledge; Schleiner, Winfried (1978): 'Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as Amazon', in: *Studies in Philology*, vol. LXXV, pp. 163–80.

nature, and that transcended those of the human sphere. Rather than depicting Elizabeth as an idealised queen, these paintings translated her likeness into a visual code that symbolically confirmed her claim on sovereign power. Under the reign of her half-brother, Edward VI, who had succeeded to the throne in 1547, the hostility of the iconoclasts had been focused particularly on religious statuary, which often displayed a vivid likeness to the human presence. Carried through the streets in ceremonial procession, it was perceived as the most 'dangerous' form of religious imagery. By removing the painted human figure from the churches, early iconoclasm, as in all of Protestant Europe, had effectively reduced painting to the genre of the portrait. Contrary to the iconoclastic purification of Zurich through the followers of Huldrych Zwingly, however, Edwardian Protestantism insisted that pictorial austerity would not reprieve the private displays of pictures in England's houses.[13] Those that were allowed to remain had to obstruct rather than enhance mimetic vision and illusion of presence, thus preventing the possibility that the beholder might be led to believe in some kind of divine or transsubstantiating communication with the image. Contrary to the persistent assumption that the isolation of the Elizabethan regime prevented the Italian tradition of perspective and *chiaroscuro* from settling in England, and that English artists were consequently engaged in inferior artistic practices, Elizabethan art treatises were concerned with the description of those painterly techniques that actively broke with mimetic illusion and emphasised the two-dimensional nature of the picture plane, as becomes apparent in the theoretical writings of Nicholas Hilliard.[14] The painter of Elizabeth's *Pelican Portrait* was a committed Protestant who regarded painting as a moral concept, and who based his justification for figurative art on 'the truth of the line, (…) which is not shamed with the light, nor needs to be obscured', while assigning shadow to the realm of betrayal, namely the betrayal of Christ by Judas, 'the traitorous act done by the night'.[15] In light of this doctrinaire understanding of line and shadow, the portraits of Elizabeth became progressively more remote from illusionism. Through

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13 See: Aston, Margaret (1988): *England's Iconoclasts. Laws against Images*, Oxford: Clarendon, p. 256.

14 David Howarth has demonstrated how the Spanish invasion of the Netherlands resulted in an influx of immigrant Flemish painters to London, who brought with them a tradition of illusionistic painting that, however, did not satisfy their English patrons. Howarth, David (1997): *Images of Rule. Art and Politics in the English Renaissance 1485–1649*, Basingstoke: Macmillan. Andrew Stott has persuasively shown how Elizabethan images addressed their beholders through the practice of writing. See: Stott, Andrew (1997): 'Henry Unton's little Lives: Inscription and Suture in the Elizabethan Portrait', in: *Word and Image*, vol. XIII, no. 1, pp. 1–22.

15 Hilliard, Nicholas [1598]: *Treatise concerning the Arte of Limning*, ed. by R. K. R. Thornton and T. G. S. Cain, Ashington: Mid-Northumberland Arts Group, 1981, p. 85, 89.

the substitution of pattern for substance, the portrait of the queen promoted an ethically and politically defined visualisation rather than an image of her human figure, rendering her as an ageless icon of perpetual sovereign power. With her body reduced to an array of textile emblems, Elizabeth's face became the mask of majesty, standing out against the darkness of her dress or the background, like the sun against the darkness of the universe. Mary E. Hazard has remarked upon this iconic representation of the queen under a mask of youth and beauty, and has drawn attention to the legal fiction lying beneath it: if the monarch never dies, he or she also never ages.[16] The representation of Elizabeth as unaltered by time was essential to maintain the illusion of her sovereignty. Her portraits began to dismantle her body into a complex composition of circles and semicircles that recall the spheres of the universe. This geometricised, fragmented representation of Elizabeth culminated in Marcus Gheeraerts' *Rainbow Portrait* from 1600. (Fig. 4) Elizabeth's face, with its conspicuously circular forehead and round wig, is surrounded by a number of spherical ruffs and veils, conveying an animated presentation of the queen who appears as the still centre, the unmoved mover of a mysterious, multi-layered cosmos of power.

Elizabeth grasps a rainbow with her right hand, which emphasises her proximity to divine power. The rainbow – symbol of God's reminder of the eternal covenant between Him and mankind – serves as an emblem to further convey the queen as signifier of the presence of God.[17] Its line draws attention to another detail of the portrait that has been the subject of intense debate: the peculiar depiction of single eyes and ears on Elizabeth's cloak, facing the beholder. Long understood to signify fame, this cloak has been compared with that of Henry Peacham's emblematic figure of *the Reason of State* from his 1612 *Minerva Britanna*.[18] As Strong points out, Peach-

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16   See: Hazard, Mary E. (1990): 'The Case for "Case" in Reading Elizabethan Portraits', in: *Mosaic*, vol. XXIII, pp. 61–88. As has been widely acknowledged, the question of whether Elizabeth's sovereign identity inhered in the queen or only in her *Mask of Beauty* has formed the subject of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the printing of which the Tudor queen censored during her lifetime. For a discussion of this context, see: Ure, Peter (1955): 'The Looking-Glass of Richard II', in: *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XXXIV, pp. 219–24; and, Stoichita, Victor (1986): 'Imago Regis: Kunsttheorie und königliches Porträt in den Meninas von Velázquez, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. XLIX, no. 1, pp. 165–89.

17   The most detailed analysis of the rainbow has been given by: Fischlin, Daniel (1997): 'Political Allegory, Absolutist Ideology, and the *Rainbow Portrait* of Queen Elizabeth I', in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. L, no. 1, pp. 175–206. For further discussion of the rainbow in relation to Marian symbolism, see: Diehl, Huston (1986): *An Index of Icons in English Emblem Books. 1500– 1700*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

18   See: Strong (1987): op. cit., (note 8). For an interpretation of the eyes and ears as symbols of fame, see: Yates, Frances Amalia (1975): *Astraea. The Imperial Theme of the Sixteenth Century*, London: Routledge. Strong equally rebuts the suggestion of René Graziani, who, alluding to Matthew 13:16–17 ('Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they

am's emblem is itself an imitation of the figure of *Gelosia* in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, of which the epigram reads: 'Be seru'd with eies, and listening eares of those / Who can from all partes giue intelligence / To gall his foe, or timely to prevent / At home his malice, and intendiment [intent]'.[19] Daniel Fischlin has addressed Strong's reference from within a political context and has convincingly demonstrated that the eyes and ears allude to the watchful gaze of the sovereign, who 'watches and listens vigilantly, seeing from all perspectives, hearing in all directions'.[20] It is this scopic dominance, characteristic for the all-seeing, all-knowing condition of the god-like ruler, that the *Rainbow Portrait* seeks to convey via the symbolism of Elizabeth's cloak. Although the queen is the object of the beholder's gaze, the portrait ultimately embraces its beholder in the political implication of its emblematic symbolism. Through the promotion of this scopic dominance, the *Rainbow Portrait* stands paradigmatically for the way in which the portraits of Elizabeth effected a consistent dynamic between the sovereign and her subjects, maintaining the divide between the observer and her observed – even in painted representation.

Elizabethan imperial ideology, within which the queen is represented in a position of all-embracing dominance, relied on Aristotelian theory and its medieval and Renaissance iconographic tradition. Gower's *Armada Portrait* expresses the queen's supremacy through manifold allusions to the maritime power of her fleet, which had devastated the galleons of the Spanish Armada, and crystallises its imperial theme in the depiction of Elizabeth controlling the globe under her right hand. Her fingers, as Roy Strong has skilfully illustrated, obscure the continent of America, where, by 1588, a colonial outpost had established the foundation of the British Empire in the

hear'), suggests that the Queen is wearing the cloak like a blessing that denotes her exemplary status as a Christian. See: Granziani, René (1972): 'The *Rainbow Portrait* of Queen Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary', in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. XXXV, pp. 247–59.

19   Strong (1987): op. cit., (note 8), p. 159.

20   See: Fischlin (1997): op. cit. (note 17), p. 183. Fischlin here extends a reading of the cloak given before in: Kelley, Francis M. (1944): 'Queen Elizabeth and her Dresses', in: *Connoisseur*, vol. CXIII, no. 2, pp. 71–9. Fischlin has summarised several additional readings of Elizabeth's cloak that are of no relevance to the discussion above, relating to the construction of the queen's sexual identity in her portraits. Pointing towards 'an exceptionally pornographic ear over Queen Elizabeth's genitals' and 'the dildo-like rainbow clasped so imperially by the Virgin Queen', Joel Fineman has understood the picture to display a 'fetishistic principle of sovereign power'. See: Fineman, Joel (1991): *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition: Essays Towards the Release of Shakespeare's Will*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, p. 228. Arguing along a similar line, Susan Frye puts forward a reading of the eyes and ears as suggestions of 'vaginal openings combined with a sense of governmental surveillance'. See: Frye, Susan (1993): *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 102–3.

Fig. 4: Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Elizabeth I -
The Rainbow Portrait*, *c.* 1600

New World.[21] Rather than being indebted to the concrete political reference of the painting alone, the presence of the globe in the *Armada Portrait* is closely related to a woodcut diagram dating from the same year, in which the queen, imperial crown on her head, is shown presiding over the outer sky, the *primum mobile*, and embracing the nine concentric spheres illustrating the Ptolemaic system of the universe.[22] The image forms the frontispiece of John Case's *Sphaera civitatis* and shows the earth

21   See: Strong (1987): op. cit., (note 8).
22   This connection was first pointed out by Roy Strong, in his 1987 *Gloriana*, see note 8.

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at the centre, labelled as *Justitia Immobilis*, consecutively enclosed by the spheres of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, each indicated by its astronomical symbol and its corresponding virtue: *Ubertas Rerum*, *Facundia*, *Clementia*, *Religio*, *Fortitudo*, *Prudentia* and *Majestas*.[23] (Fig. 5) The seven celestial orbs are encompassed by the eighth sphere of the fixed stars, labelled as the Councillor of Elizabeth's Star Chamber, which itself is enclosed in an outermost sphere inscribed with the official title of the queen: *Elizabetha D(eum) G(ratium) Angliae, Franciae et Hiberniae Regina Fidei Defensatrix*. This last sphere relates to the outermost moveable sphere, the *primum mobile*, which, according to the medieval notion of the universe, enclosed the unity of all things, and is moved by a single prime mover, the *primus motor*.[24] As used in medieval scholasticism, the notion of the prime mover, here ascribed to Elizabeth, was understood to cause movement without itself being in motion. The existence of such an entity was asserted in relation to an analogy with the phenomena of nature, and the *primus motor* was regarded as devoid of potentiality; a motionless prime mover which must either be moved by itself or not move at all, and thus cannot simultaneously be a cause of motion and be in motion. In the fourteenth century, Thomas of Strasbourg abandoned the Aristotelian conviction that only moveable spheres could exist, and declared that this outermost moveable sphere of the unmoved mover was comprised of an immobile orb that existed beyond all the mobile orbs.[25] Elizabeth's position as prime mover of the spheres is quite unusual. A diagram of the celestial spheres by Petrus Apianus, taken from his *Cosmographicus liber*, which was first published in 1524, inscribes this immobile sphere as the empyrean heaven, *Coelum Empirre Um Habitacu Lum Dei e Omnium Electorum* – the dwelling place of God and all the elect – which must be immobile because immobility is the only appropriate state for the blessed, who themselves are in a perfect state of rest. Shielding the spheres under her cloak in reference to the iconography of the *Madonna della misericordia*, Elizabeth is represented as *regina universi* while simultaneously exerting her beneficial influence and supreme power over state and cosmos.[26] Two decades later, under the reign of Elizabeth's successor

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23  John Case, *Sphaera civitatis; Hoc est; Reipublicae recte ac pie secundum leges administrandae ratio*, Oxford, 1588.

24  The definitive analysis of the medieval and Renaissance understanding of the universe has been given by: Grant, Edward (1994): *Planets, Stars, and Orbs. The Medieval Cosmos, 1200–1687*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

25  See: Edward Grant's chapter on the 'Immobile Orb', in: idem (1994): op. cit., (above), pp. 371–89.

26  The iconography familiar from spiritual paintings of the *Madonna della misericordia* has been noted before by Louis Montrose, who relates the motive to Elizabeth's last speech made before Parliament in 1601, wherein the queen described herself as 'A taper of trewe virgin waxe to waste my self and spend my life that I might give light and comfort to those

Fig. 5: John Case, *Sphaera civitatis: Hoc est; Reipublicae recte ac pie secundum leges administrandae raetio*, 1588

King James I, Robert Fludd's 1617 diagram of the *Cosmic Monochord* depicts God's hand, reaching out from the cloud and turning the universe. Through the powerful ideological move of redirecting practices generated from the cult of the Virgin Mary towards her hypostatic self as the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth completed the transformation of the Church of England into a political entity and reflection of monarchy as it had been initiated by her father, and in so doing created a national institution to which all loyal English people, regardless of their religion, owed allegiance.

that lived under me'. See: Montrose (1986): op. cit, (note 9), p. 334. For a thorough treatment of this tradition in English art, see: Duffy, Eamon (1992): *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Fig. 6: Anthony van Dyck, *Charles I in the Hunting Field*, 1635

While Holbein's fresco of Henry VIII had aspired to convey monarchic power by a particularly credible illusion of his physical presence, this very illusion was considered inappropriate for an effective expression of the queen's sovereign dignity. Portraits of the Tudor queen promoted her as an unchanged, ageless icon, and were fashioned not as her image but as the medium carrying the imprint of her sovereign power. Significantly, the Hilliardian doctrine of the truth of the line thus allowed

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for an iconic paradigm that promoted the portrait of Elizabeth in association with a theological understanding of the image as a reflection (Abbild) outlined on a neutral substance that holds no existence in itself. Designed to dissolve in the presence of its sitter, the portrait of Elizabeth became the icon of the queen's supposedly immortal power. Elizabeth had comprehended the power that sprang from the counterfeit presence in Holbein's image of her father, and exploited the illusion of her painted presence to the point where the image diminished into a sacrament of her sovereignty that rejected any notion of representation.

It has repeatedly been claimed for the history of the English royal portrait that Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII surpassed that of any other sovereign after him until Anthony van Dyck painted Charles I in the mid-seventeenth century. Celebrated by art-historical scholarship as the most finely tuned portrait of a seventeenth-century monarch, Van Dyck's portrait of *Charles I in the Hunting-Field* from 1635 shows the king taking a short rest from the hunt. (Fig. 6) Charles, standing on a subtly orchestrated hillside that opens up into an expansive view over the English countryside, seems to be turning his head at the very moment when our eyes approach the scene and see the king not only in perfect command, but also expressing calm curiosity regarding the reason for this interruption of a moment of private leisure. Showing neither of his two attendants conversing with their master, the scene is as carefully arranged as a stage set that Charles has just entered, in order to enjoy a silent dialogue with nature. Illustrating the unique position of the English sovereign, the horse, itself correctly proportioned, but reduced in size in order not to dominate the figure of the king, paws the ground subserviently, while the trees above Charles's head seem to form a natural canopy, below which he is raised up on a natural pulpit above the spectator.[27] Van Dyck's portrait of the second Stuart king asserts its representation in the very act of distancing itself from the material of its production, thereby deliberately revealing the polysemic interplay of opacity and transparency that constitutes any painted representation. In its conscious display of royal presence as something that is evoked by the art of illusion, Van Dyck's portrait of Charles I thus exhibits an understanding of representation that stands opposed to

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27  My brief account of the painting is indebted to these much more thorough discussions: Brown, Christopher (1982): *Van Dyck*, Oxford: Phaidon; Hennen, Insa Christiane (1995): *Karl zu Pferde. Ikonologische Studien zu Anton van Dycks Reiterporträts Karls I. von England*, Frankfurt/Main: Lang; Howarth (1997): op. cit., (note 14); Johns, Christopher (1988): 'Politics, Nationalism and Friendship in Van Dyck's *Le Roi à la chasse*', in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. LI, pp. 243–61; Moffitt, John F. (1983): '*Le Roi à la chasse*? Kings, Christian Knights, and Van Dyck's Singular "Dismounted Equestrian-Portrait" of Charles I', in: *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. IV, pp. 79–99. For a detailed reassessment, see: Hille, Christiane (2012): 'England's Apelles and the *sprezzatura* of Kingship: Anthony Van Dyck's *Charles I in the Hunting-Field* Reconsidered', in: *Artibus et Historiae*, no. 65, pp. 151–66.

the Elizabethan notion of the royal image as rejecting any notion of representation. Aware of its ability to re-present the presence of the Stuart king, Van Dyck's image of Charles I presents the absolute royal portrait, addressing its beholder, as Louis Marin first put it, by saying: *Le Roi, c'est moi*.[28] The portraits of Elizabeth and Charles present two completely different notions of the royal image and, as such, provoke a number of questions regarding the nature and significance of the painted image in English court culture at the turn of the seventeenth century. It is my contention that the processes briefly sketched here came about as a result of an epistemological change in the perception of representation at the early seventeenth-century English court, which is the subject addressed in the following chapters.

28  See: Marin, Louis (1995): *Philippe de Champaigne ou la présence cachée*, Paris: Hazan. For a detailed discussion see Chapter One.

# Introduction

State portraits of James I, King of England, Scotland and Wales from 1603 to 1625, seem to lag far behind those of his predecessor, Elizabeth I, and of his son, Charles I. Even the stateliest of his portraits, Paul Van Somer's *James I* from 1619, shows the king in a somewhat antiquated manner, standing in full apparel in front of a window that opens onto a perspective view of Inigo Jones's Banqueting House. (Fig. 7) The building, which introduced the Palladian manner to English architecture, is, in fact, the only modern element in the iconography of the king's portrait. James was well known for his extensive learning and his love of books, but far less so for his patronage of the visual arts – a fact that has led to a general neglect, particularly by art historians, of the study of his court and its culture. Instead, their attention has focused on the paintings and sculptures collected by James's son, Charles I, who, during the 24 years of his ill-fated reign from 1625 to 1649, assembled the largest and most significant royal art collection of his time. In light of his father's relative indifference towards the fine arts, Charles's enthusiasm for painting seems unexpected. It has been argued that this enthusiasm arose from a fashion for princely collecting that emulated the imposing art collections on the Continent; such collections had already sparked the interest of Charles's elder bother Henry, the late Prince of Wales, whose untimely death in 1612 has sometimes been regarded as marking the end of all encouragement of the arts at the English court in the first decades of the seventeenth century.[1]

This study, however, takes a different view of the state of the visual arts during the reign of James I. It refers in particular to the collecting and patronage of one of the king's closest advisers, George Villiers, the First Duke of Buckingham, whose

[1]    See: Toynbee, Margaret (1949): 'A Portrait called "Henry, Prince of Wales"', in: *Burlington Magazine*, vol. LXXVI, no. 550, pp. 21–2; Strong, Roy (1986): *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance*, London: Thames and Hudson; Wilks, Timothy (1997): 'Art Collecting at the English Court from the Death of Henry, Prince of Wales to the Death of Anne of Denmark', in: *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. IX, no. 1, pp. 31–48.

Fig. 7: Paul van Somer, *King James I and VI*, 1619

portraits, commissioned from masters such as Anthony van Dyck and Peter Paul Rubens between 1620 and 1628, surpassed those of any other Englishman at the time, and, as this study argues, significantly changed the English court's perception of the painted image. Although Villiers was a central figure in national and international politics under both the Jacobean and the Caroline eras, little has been written on the man who began his courtly career as James's cupbearer in 1616 and quickly ascended through the ranks and titles of the Jacobean elite until, in 1624, he became principal minister of the English Crown, laying the foundation not only for Charles's politics after 1625, but also for his taste in the collecting and commissioning of painting.

Of the few historians to examine Buckingham's role as personal and political favourite of two successive English monarchs, none has paused to discuss his career as a collector and patron of the arts, concentrating instead on his role in the increasing separation of both James and Charles from their subjects in questions of domestic and international politics.[2] Historians concerned with the history of early modern collecting in England have preferred to study the careers of other, more eminent, collectors of the early Stuart court, considering Buckingham's role as a patron of painting and sculpture as that adopted by an arriviste to the inner circles of court society.[3] These studies have emphasised the fact of Buckingham's untitled lineage and have confined his role to that of the parvenu who aspires to the style of his social betters, thereby underestimating the significance of a man who assembled

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2    See: Sharpe, Kevin (1992): *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, New Haven: Yale University Press; and, idem (1987): *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3    The account of Philipp Fehl is representative of the unquestioned assumption that Buckingham was principally a mindless art collector: '… what for Arundel was an earnest persuasion, for Buckingham, it appears, was more readily a matter of prestige and competition for first place on all counts in the affection of the art-loving king.' Fehl, Philipp P. (1981): 'Franciscus Junius and the Defence of Art', in: *Artibus et Historiae*, no. 3, pp. 9–55, p. 15. Arguing in the same vein is Robert Hill: '… with the Duke of Buckingham, there is no evidence that [he] was a connoisseur himself or played any important part in the formation of his collection.' See: Hill, Robert (2003a): 'The Ambassador as Art Agent: Sir Dudley Carleton and Jacobean Collecting', in: Edward Chaney (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting: The Reception of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, Studies in British Art XII, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 240–55, p. 243. For similar accounts, see: Parry, Graham (1981): *The Golden Age Restor'd. The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603–1642*, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Brown, Jonathan (1995): *Kings and Connoisseurs. Collecting Art in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; and, Howarth, David (1997): *Images of Rule. Arts and Politics in the English Renaissance 1485–1649*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

one of the principal English art collections of his time, and who greatly influenced the taste and patronage of two monarchs.

Early modern English collecting is still largely associated with the name of Thomas Howard, the 21st Earl of Arundel, who is commonly acknowledged to have guided his countrymen in taste and collecting.[4] The erudite earl, whose attachment to the art of classical antiquity has been amply discussed in studies of early modern collecting, has emerged as the figurehead of a particular art-historical discourse begun by men like Jonathan Richardson, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, and John Ruskin, which celebrates the history of English connoisseurship and promotes collecting as 'an education in taste for the nation'.[5] Arundel's

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4    See: Sutton, Denys (1947): 'Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel and Surrey, as a Collector of Drawings', in: *Burlington Magazine*, vol. LXXXIX, no. 526, pp. 3–9, 32–7, 75–7; Howarth, David (1985a): *Lord Arundel and His Circle*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Howarth, David (1985b): *Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel: Patronage and Collecting in the Seventeenth-Century*, Exh. Cat., Oxford: Ashmolean Museum; Fletcher, Jennifer (1996): 'The Arundels in the Veneto', in: *Apollo*, vol. CXLIV, no. 414, pp. 63–9; Jaffé, David (1996): 'The Earl and Countess of Arundel: Renaissance Collectors', in: *Apollo*, vol. CXLIV, no. 414, pp. 3–35; Scarisbrick, Diana (1996): 'The Arundel Gem Cabinet', in: *Apollo*, vol. CXLIV, no. 141, pp. 45–8; Howarth, David (2002): 'The Arundel Collection: Collecting and Patronage in England in the Reigns of Philip III and Philip IV', in: Jonathan Brown (ed.), *The Sale of the Century: Artistic Relations between Spain and Great Britain, 1604 – 1655*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 69–86; Gilman, Ernest B. (2003): *Recollecting the Arundel Circle: Discovering the Past, Recovering the Future*, New York: Lang; Roberts, Jane (2003): 'Thomas Howard, the Collector Earl of Arundel and Leonardo's Drawings', in: Edward Chaney (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 256–83; Angelicoussis, Elizabeth (2004): 'The Collection of Classical Sculptures of the Earl of Arundel, "Father of Virtue in England"', in: *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. XVI, no. 2, pp. 143–59.

5    The quote is from: Orgel, Stephen (2000): 'Idols of the Gallery: Becoming a Connoisseur in Renaissance England', in: Peter Erickson (ed.), *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 251–83. For the topos of the Connoisseur in English art historical writing, see: Richardson, Jonathan (1972): *The Connoisseur: An Essay on the whole Art of Criticism as it relates to Painting*, repr. in: *The Works of Jonathan Richardson*, London: Egerton, pp. 103–71; Sumner, Ann (1989): 'Sir John Charles Robinson: Victorian Collector and Connoisseur', in: *Apollo*, vol. CXXX, no. 341, pp. 226–30; Lloyd, Stephen (1991): 'Richard Cosway, RA: The Artist as Collector and Connoisseur and Virtuoso', in: *Apollo*, vol. CXXXIII, no. 352, pp. 398–405; Exh. Cat. (1995): *Soane: Connoisseur and Collector. A Selection of Drawing from Sir John Soane's Collection*, London: Sir John Soane's Museum; Burn, Lucilla (1997): *Sir William Hamilton, Collector and Connoisseur*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Cowan, Brian (1998): 'Arenas of Connoisseurship. Auctioning Art in Later Stuart England', in: Michael North and David Ormrod (eds.), *Art Markets in Europe. 1400–1800*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 153–66; Wessely, Anna (2000): 'The Knowledge of an Early

significance in the history of early modern collecting derives from the fact that he remains the earliest-known English connoisseur to have built a separate structure for the display of his antique sculptures and busts at Arundel House on the Strand, next door to Somerset House, the palace of the queen. The two-storey gallery has been recognised from the background of a pair of portraits by Daniel Mytens that display the earl and his wife Alethea Talbot, Countess of Arundel, in front of the building's upper and lower storeys.[6] (Figs. 8 & 9) The gallery was erected as an additional wing to the medieval structure of Arundel House by Inigo Jones after his return from Italy, where the architect had accompanied his patron on a journey lasting several months that took them as far as Naples and introduced them to the architecture of Palladio.[7] The new building was designed to reach into the garden, where

Eighteenth-Century Connoisseur: Shaftesbury and the Fine Arts', in: *Acta historiae atrium*, vol. XLI, pp. 279–309; Plampin, Matthew (2005): '"A Stern and Just Respect for Truth": John Ruskin, Giotto, and the Arundel Society', in: *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol. VI, no. 1, pp. 59–78; Mount, Harry (2006): 'The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass: Constructions of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in: *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. XXIX, no. 2, pp. 169–84.

6    Mytens' portrait pair has been studied most thoroughly by: Novikova, Anastassia (2004): 'Virtuosity and Declensions of Virtue: Thomas Arundel and Alethea Talbot seen by Virtue of a Portrait Pair by Daniel Mytens and a Treatise by Franciscus Junius', in: Jan de Jong (ed.), *Virtus: virtusiteit en kunstliefhebbers in de Nederlanden. 1500–1700*, Zwolle: Waanders, pp. 308–33. On Arundel's significance for the history of the English art museum, see: Impey, Oliver and MacGregor, Arthur (2001): *The Origins of the Museum. The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; MacGregor, Arthur (1983): 'Collectors and Collections of Rarities in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in: idem (ed.), *Tradescant's Rarities. Essays on the Foundation of the Ashmolean Museum 1683*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 70–97; Waterfield, Giles (1993): 'The Development of the Early Art Museum in Britain', in: Per Bjurström (ed.), *The Genesis of the Art Museum in the Eighteenth Century*, Stockholm: Nationalmuseum Stockholm, pp. 81–111; Miller, Edward (1974): *That Noble Cabinet. A History of the British Museum*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press; Waterfield, Giles (1991): *Palaces of Art. Art Galleries in Britain 1790–1900*, London: Dulwich Picture Gallery; Taylor, Brandon (1999): *Art for the Nation*, London: Manchester University Press; Barlow, Paul and Trodd, Colin (2000): *Governing Cultures. Art Institutions in Victorian London*, Aldershot: Ashgate; Pointon, Marcia (1994): *Art Apart. Art Institutions and Ideology across England and Northern America*, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Prior, Nick (2002): *Museums and Modernity. Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture*, Oxford and New York: Berg.

7    It needs to be pointed out here that the first recorded use of the term *Grand Tour*, which became a typical occupation of privileged young Englishmen in the eighteenth century, is Richard Lassels' *The Voyage of Italy*, posthumously published in 1670. For a good introduction, see: Brennan, Michael G. (2004): *The Origins of the Grand Tour: The Travels of Robert Montagu, Lord Mandeville (1649–1654), William Hammond (1655–1658), Banaster Maynard (1660–1663)*, London: The Hakluyt Society; Stoye, John (1989): *English travellers*
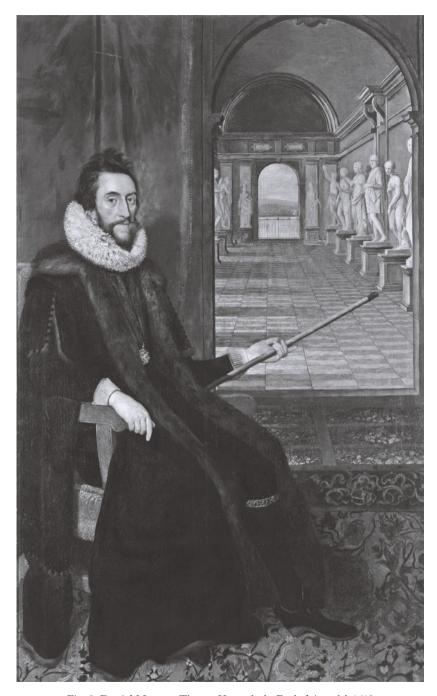
Fig. 8: Daniel Mytens, *Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel*, 1618